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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000103

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SUBJECT: AFGHAN FIRST: UNAMA MEETING STRESSES AFGHAN
LEADERSHIP ON ELECTIONS, CONFERENCES

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Preparations for the January 28 London Conference and the feasibility of preparing for and securing funding for the scheduled May 2010 parliamentary election were discussed at a meeting of key ambassadors assembled at UNAMA on January 11. The British ambassador emphasized the need to share ownership of the London Conference with the Afghan government. SRSK Kai Eide emphasized that the decision to postpone the elections must come from the Afghan government, and not from the international community. End Summary.

London Conference

¶2. (C) Leading off the meeting of more than twenty ambassadors, British Ambassador Sedwill claimed that "good progress" was being made on the London Conference, and that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) was finalizing drafts of the six papers being prepared for the conference, which will then be used to draft the conference communique. The communique would acknowledge the commitments made by GIROA and provide international commitments in response. Sedwill expressed his hope that the communique would be signed by all sixty-eight participants in the conference, but if consensus is not reached, the communique would be signed by the three conference hosts (the UK, UN and GIROA).

¶3. (C) A dual commitment is essential to the success of the conference, the French ambassador stressed, suggesting that the communique should lay out that the international community will do its part if GIROA does theirs. The communique, he said, should express a commitment to the Afghan people from the international community, a view Eide seconded.

2010 Elections: When and How?

¶4. (C) While unwilling to comment on GIROA's plans on the elections in front of the large group, Eide stated that he had expressed his concerns over the planned May 2010 parliamentary election date to Karzai and during his presentation to the UN Security Council in New York last week. His concerns were: inadequate time for planning; need for reforms; security; and the need to secure international funding. He said he left the decision up to the Afghan government and urged the international community to be part of the discussion on postponement, but not to be seen as ganging up on GIROA to force a decision. Eide described the IEC's 2010 elections timetable as very similar to that for the 2009 election, but he cautioned that, in contrast to 2009, there was inadequate planning time. Under the current schedule, he noted, the timetable would begin within five

days with candidate nominations.

¶15. (C) On the mechanics of holding an election, UNDP-Elect head Margie Cook stated to the group that the IEC's request for the remaining money from the 2009 election, which the IEC believes to be \$70-80 million (a figure not yet confirmed by UNDP-Elect), to be transferred to the 2010 election fund was not feasible. There is no mechanism to allow for such a transfer, she said, and further, all donors must have the opportunity to consult on how their money will be spent. Ambassador Eikenberry asked whether donor countries would have "red cards" they could use to stop spending if they disagree with the allocation, and Cook agreed that they would.

Next Steps for UNAMA

¶16. (C) Looking to the future, and to his departure on March 1, SRSG Eide said that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon had reached out to Karzai about his pick for the next SRSG. Eide also distributed a concept paper (emailed to SCA/A) that details UNAMA's proposal for "strengthened consultation and coordination mechanisms for Afghanistan." The paper represents the views of Finance Minister Zakhilwal on the need to direct more foreign funding to GIROA via a Secretariat in the Ministry of Finance to oversee national programs. The paper also addresses the need for better consultation and coordination within the international community by proposing re-structuring UNAMA, most notably by appointing 15 to 20 senior advisors to UNAMA from major donor

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countries, as well as a high-level ISAF advisor to coordinate development and governance efforts at the PRT level. Eide asked for responses to the paper by January 14.

Cabinet Questions

¶17. (C) Speaking privately with Eikenberry and Sedwill, Eide expressed his concerns on several of Karzai's new nominees for the cabinet, especially former interior minister Zarar Ahmad Moqbel, who has been nominated to be Minister of Counternarcotics. Eide intimated to Karzai that Zarar was not a good choice for counternarcotics, given his reputation for corruption. Karzai countered that Zarar was "a good man." Eide's concerns were shared by Eikenberry and Sedwill, who said the UK is considering withholding funding from the Ministry of Counternarcotics if Zarar is confirmed. Karzai also mentioned that he is considering naming Stanekzai as head of reconciliation and reintegration, but he has not yet made a decision. Spanta may be offered a position as foreign affairs advisor, Karzai said, but Eide countered that this could make for an awkward triumvirate for Karzai, who would be advised by his National Security Advisor, Foreign Minister, and Spanta. Spanta is no longer being considered for the position of National Security Advisor, Karzai said, because he is not interested in security issues.
EIKENBERRY